Danielle Swain aka MsDz

Journal 2014

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January 5, 2014
B to the Beat B to the Beat
It's the Birthday Girl the Birthday Girl
BB-DBp BB-DBp the Birthday Girl!!!!

January 6, 2014
The New Year is six days old, and what a week it has been. But I want to start with Thursday the 26th, the evening we went to Old Navy and did a little clothes shopping. That seemed to me to be the start of a great New Year. From there I realized I could actually fit into off the rack readily available "average" or just above average sized clothing. No more xxx or lager for me! Not that I did not know that just about everything I owned was too big for me but what I realized is I actually fit into a much smaller size. The next day I went back to get a coat, a nice well-fitting coat. On the 28th I traveled up to Ringgold Georgia to visit with my Son Matthew and his fiancé Hanna dressed in my new leggings new nice fitting top and my new coat. I even put on a little makeup. It was a wonderful visit. It started with me letting Hanna know she could ask me any questions she wanted and letting her know I was open to answering them all. That eased her greatly and she did ask lots of questions and so did I. Her parents know I am transgendered, they look forward to meeting me as I do in meeting them. I am welcome to visit often, welcome to be part of the children's life, indeed more than welcome. We had a great meal, after dinner Matthew gave a detailed accounting of his time in Afghanistan along with a video of his time there. It was intense, with far more conflict, fighting and engagement than I had expected. I am very glad he is back safe, though suffering some "shell shock" aka PTSD he is relatively sound. The rest of that week went smooth, and the 'Just For Sunday' meeting went well with Chris celebrating 20 something years. A great meeting in fact.
On the evening of Monday the 30th Sidney arrived. We talked well into the next day, about the past, the present, about how we have changed, our losses and our gains. The next day we went over to Livi Ray Lingerie in Kennesaw and got fitted for a new bra, the first in a long time. It fit well was very comfortable, as comfortable as a bra can be and still be supportive. We talked more had a nice lunch in the afternoon we went to the

Clermont Lounge, Atlanta's first and longest continually operating strip club that opened in 1965. It has established a nationwide reputation for its kitschy atmosphere and unusual dancers. We sipped ginger ale and brought plenty of dollar bills to hand out to the dancers. Later that evening I went over to the 24 hour room and wished my friends a happy new year. I got some good remarks about my new uplift. I left a half hour before midnight to spend it with Sidney and Diane. It was a great last of the year day. January 1st started with a long walk through Kennesaw national park and ended in a home cooked meal, along with more good conversation and some frank discussion about cloths and aging well while still looking good. Thursday we did a howl bunch of cloths shopping and did a movie. Friday morning Sidney headed back to Richmond VA. I spent Friday and Saturday bagging up all my old clothing for donation, cleaned out my drawers cleared out my closet and organized all my new clothing. Sunday I showed up to my home group dressed to the nines. ☺

January 8, 2014
Dear Matthew,
I applaud your efforts to seek awareness of these issues and your efforts to gain an understanding of the political social and economic conditions of our times. These things are complicated troubling and steeped in misinformation and conjecture with the truth elusive, scary at times and constantly changing.
Seeking 'the truth' whether a personal truth or a social truth often leads one down the proverbial rabbit hole that can lead to a pool of tears and a mad tea-party. It can also lead to a kind of experience, a personal observation that is liberating.
Where ever this Journey of political / social discovery takes you I say "be courageous" don't be afraid to go to hell and back but do come back.

Some of my experience and thoughts: (It may assist you or it may not.)

The story of mankind's struggle for freedom is as old as mankind itself. So is the suppression of freedom. It is part of our story since mankind told stories, written about since we could write. Freedom and freewill has been philosophized about since mankind started philosophizing. It is part of who we are. So is the suppression of freedom. The debate as to whether there is real freedom or if it is just an illusion is an ongoing debate. My take on this is as fallows; some things are up to me and most

are not. If I struggle to change the things I cannot change I am miserable. Most all I can change is in my head and close around me. I work to be aware and I know that my awareness is limited, I understand I will never fully know the truth anything or myself. I work to cultivate internal harmony, with an understanding that I struggle with that and will as long as I live. I do what I can, write make films take pictures and work at my job. I strive to act brave in what I do. I strive to cultivate friendships. I strive to be of service to something or someone. In all this I can express my views. This is all new to me for I spent much of my life struggling with personal issues and being stoned so my sphere is small. I see others out in the world with a much larger sphere and a greater impact on the world at large. Sometimes I envy them but I do not regret, I am gratefully for what I have.
Politically I am left of liberal, nonviolent, want to be active but not sure how. As for others, I will quote our 'Declaration of Independence'.

"...That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

As underlined, I believe much of mankind is disposed to suffer the evils of the world. I do not blame them or pity them for I am one of them no matter how I feel or think. I marvel at Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Abram Lincoln and many others both liberators and statesmen alike, along with many writers and artists. Some famous others infamous most nameless and unknown, all those that do what they do, do what they can and cause some change big or small. Within all the greed all the conspiracies there is a realm of resistance. All that resistance, I like to believe, is making progress, even if it is slow and long.
Love you much

Peace Out

January 16, 2014

Cradle of love
I can hold you and rock you in my arms
Care for you and you can cry or laugh
Or dream and let your cares drift away

I can let you hold me and rock me in your arms
Let you care for me and I can cry or laugh
Or dream and let my cares drift away

I can be the mother or father unaffected
The parent that never was there to care
And hold you in my arms

I can be the child that never was
Able to rest within your arms
And let you hold me till I am composed

I can
Can you?

January 27, 2014

Poverty a yen for fairytales. A propensity for obesity.

Not everyone wants to sit in there empty room, some folks enjoy community common good

If the common good has to make up fairytales then it is not good for anybody

Can you imagine if people didn't believe? The things they would get up to?

The exact same thing they do now, just out in the open.

It would be a freak show of murder and debauchery.

If the only thing keeping a person decent is the expectation of divine reward and that person is a piece of shit.

That judgment is infallible?

What does religion say about life? You got to get together tell yourself a story that violates every law of the universe just to get through the day. What does that say about reality?

You sound panicked. You think it is all a scam?

It has been that way since one monkey looked at the sun and told the other monkey "he said for you to give me your share" People are so frail they would rather put a coin in a wishing well then buy dinner. Transference of fear and self-loathing is an authoritarian vessel, a catharsis. The high priest absorbs there dread with his narrative. Because of this he is affective in proportion to the amount of certainty he can project. Some linguistic anthropologists think that religion is a language vires that rewrites pathways in the brain and dulls critical thinking.

For someone that sees no point is existence you sure fret about it a lot and you still sound panicked.

At least I am not racing to a red light. We all got a life trap, a genetic deep certainty that things will be different, that you will move to another city and that you will meet the people that will be the friends for the rest of your life; that you will fall in love and be fulfilled. Fulfillment; closure; two empty jars to hold this shit storm. Nothing is ever fulfilled, not until the very end. And closure, nothing is ever over. The ontological fallacy of expecting a light at the end of the tunnel that is what religion sells. Same as psychiatry. The preacher encourages your capacity for illusion and tells you it a virtue. There is money to be had in doing that. It all is such a desperate sense of entitlement. "Surely this is all for me, I am so important."

Paraphrased from:
Opening scene of 'True Detective' episode "The Locked Room"

February 10, 2014
I walk to the edge of the earth and look over. I am concerned about what I see, how I see us living. We most of us struggle and toil in menial labor, meaningless tasks that fill our days often with nothing more than trifles. Labors that feed us just a little just enough to keep us going in a kind of sleeping sleepless state. Our affairs of love lacking true love a love of necessity with no proper passion. A kind of diminished existence whirling around objects of commerce and industry that feed us

little more than distraction. Objects of commerce and industry wishing to be art disguised as art for the sack of art nonexistent living only in our dreams.

March 25, 2014
“I woke up this morning with love on my mind” said Neal Young in a song I heard last night. He said other words about love too and most all of them fit me like an old worn shirt.

I look at myself in the mirror and see an old worn face tattered and used just like that shirt yet in its eyes love still grows as spring comes new over these many years

Love still grows with no one to harvest its bounty except the earth it grows in. Old dark and dusty earth. On its face lines from wheels and tracks of long ago scaring a story on its surface that can tell you of darling sweet honey.

April 18, 2014
It is as they say "we are all going to die"
So, I guess there is no reason to struggle
But I would like to grow up before I die.
I would like to give one true love a deep kiss before I roll into the arms of death.
No one lives forever
In the end it is in the living of life where we cause death to wonder and ponder the mystery in being alive
Life is something death can only take but never have.

Imagine a golden thread a ribbon if you like
Dangling down visible in the corner of your eye.
This golden thread resides in the heart of your child
In the hearts of all you love and care for
And those who care for you.
Imagine you can reach for it take hold it
And it will hold you through any trial any struggle
Like a true and natural loving mother and father would.

Poseidon had seven daughters with Pleione. They are called the Pleiades. Their individual names are Merope, Celaeno, Asterope, Alcyon, Taigeti, Elektra and Maia.

May 15, 2014

Pome submitted to goodreads poetry contest

There is no meaning to life other than to live it

Sound bites snippets pieces of created content
Like art pop modern classical surrealists or other wise
All around all the time in every part of our being
Forever and always

Long since past tense of doings for the sake of doing
Now to sell to state to move to make you feel this way or that
Only to empty your pockets so others can go to the bank
Cash in move up and live life to their fullest in comfort
Left alone in the tower above the signs that blind our eyes

And you who look for the meaning in it all
See all there is to see in the moving and the makings
Of the shakers and craters of the signs that lead to nowhere
Hanging all around us pointing this way and that
Blocking everything behind them seen only long ago
Now invisible to us new beings in this new world of ours
Where we reach to read the meaning of the words
Upon the sign right before our eyes the sign
Intentionally blurred by the false creator of our city

May 19, 2014 5AM

It’s Monday morning a little after 5:30am. I started my day off with my usual obsessions; checking email checking eBay and making coffee with half and half, the latter being at a level of addiction. I contemplate my coffee with half and half before I get out of bed. I contemplate my coffee with half and half before I got to bed yesterday night.

Yesterday, Sunday three slightly significant events occurred: In

the morning at my weekly home group I listened to peoples stories, and an epiphany dawned on me. Not an earth shattering epiphany but an epiphany none the less. In a fellowship where distinctions of differences are underplayed, similarities stressed, our differences as a group in relationship with the rest of society is placed as a badge of honor, a prideful distinction that sets us apart from the rest of the herd. It is one of the ties that bind us and keep us tethered to it. Later in the day I watched the movie Don Jon a romantic comedy starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt Scarlett Johansson Julianne Moore Tony Danza and Brie Larson. Briefly it is about a man and his addiction with pornography, his inability to have a real romantic loving sexual relationship and his somewhat accidental whimsical stumble into a true and honest romantic affair, leading him into becoming an authentic person. Later in the day when I was on a walk around my neighborhood listening to 'This American Life' on NPR I heard stories of American expatriates living in Paris. Like me, it was a long standing dream of the story tellers to live in Paris. Unlike me it was something they have fulfilled. Listening to their stories, they gave credence to my doubts and skepticism of that dream, and gave credence to some aspects of that dream. With their dream fulfilled the feeling of being apart, not accepted or connected with the world and others was still there. Living in Paris did not take that away. The adventure was there, the sense of fresh and new was there with all its excitement and wonder, yet still that agonizing feeling of not being part of being distant and alone, the heart of the dream of being in Paris, that nagging dreadful feeling was still with them. Paris with all its allure all its prestige could not take that away. If life is like the move 'Don Jon' and it is only through serendipity that I find my authentic self I had better get on with living, give up Paris and all my other dreams and live. What comes, comes. What does not come, well, why worry about that.

6/12/14
Over and around the tree and down the rabbit hole, the soft green grass at my feet again. And there I go. All the things distracting me seem left behind and I am alone again alone with my music my heart my mind and in that contemplation I drift in my solitude to that place of self-discovery. That place I have read about in books letters and manuals.
There is a reason people want you Susie, you have a delicate vulnerability that touches the heart. A slightly damaged crust

which seems to open you up letting out something sweet and sticky that draws others to the touch and a desire to taste. There is no shame in this it is as I see **you** are. Also that crust is firm ruff and hard. Still that too is desirable though not as much as the softness. This is my image my fantasy even but I do believe it is what others see too. I think there is a truth in what I imagine.
I love most of Philip Glass I have him on now and I just love the sound.
I am reading "liters to a young poet" by some so and so from the 19thth century a writer I can't remember his name. He supports my necessity for solitude commands it even as the means to self-discovery. And he is right that there are few ways to find oneself to give oneself a name. A artist and tradesman a whatever, and whatever it is the label is in deep in the heart. It must be reached exposed and believed. Whatever it is it too must be accepted. For my integrity lies within it. If I am to be something I must go there and set aside everything else. It does not matter my age in life my station or my comforts. I cannot will not let this those things distract me from what I must do. In solitude.

"Avoid furnishing material for the drama which is always impending between parents and children; it uses up much of the children's strength and wastes away the love of their elders, which is operative and warm even when it does not comprehend. Demand no advice from them and reckon with no understanding; but believe in a love that is preserved for you like a heritage, and trust that in this love there is a strength and a blessing which you are not bound to leave behind you though you may travel far."
Rainer Rilke

Dear Matthew
As your first father's day is upon you I start this letter with a quote from Rainer Rilke, a writer of the early 20th Century. It is from one of his letters though not to his son, Rainer was childless, it was to someone he endeared himself to like a son. And as this is your first of many father's day, I always think of you around this time but this time I think of you even with more intensity more emotion and love.

I have no device or wisdom about being a father for you, indeed I have little understand in that regard, but I do know the love I have and I believe in that and there is a strength in that for me. It is there with me, has always been there with me, will remain with me. Yes, I have traveled far leaving you and everything behind and still I had that indelible love of my child unexplainable to me at times, at times being the only love I felt.

In these last seven years I have moved closer to home to you to life, I still tread lightly. I do not want to add to the “drama”. I do not want those I love to feel weary over me I do not wish to hinder what love they have for me, so I move slowly with reflection and some humility.

Now you too are a father, I am privileged to see some of that and what an amazing sight it is. I look fondly at your children I see your face in them, and I see my father’s face in them too.

Happy Father’s Day

With all my love

6/13/14
Hi Dan,
It has been very hectic around here work and all. I wanted to get back to you before time and the days slipped by. It has been a pleasure doing business with you and I am glad you are pleased with the items.

Marietta is a lovely not so sleepy suburb of Atlanta and has a long history much of it around the civil war. I live in a ranch style home somewhat secluded and away from the hustle and bustle. I live with a roommate that I have known since 1998. We are more like sisters than good friends. We help each other out even though we don't agree on much. We keep a good balance and the household running smooth. I like it here because I have a lot of solitude and am still close to big city life.

I looked over the news letter, Are you part of the "North Coast Open Studios"?

It is difficult to get traffic to web sights, I have a few and worked on generating traffic but found the work to generate traffic took away form the work. It helped a little but was not worth what it took away

so I stopped. The websites I have are more of a kind of a storage place if people seed them that is fine if not that is fine too. I have had to let it go as to what others do see or say. I may feel alone in it all but the small group of friends I have nurtured make up for all that.

It is 8am here and I woke up late as it is and there are dogs awaiting there feeding. I will get back to you on the 70's ask any questions you like I will take no offense.

Kind Regards

Danielle

P.S. I like your idea of putting the date in the header and will use it if that is okay with you.

6/14/14

The morning started with a leftover dream of mayhem and murder by a sinister child destroying a town on the edge of the digital age set back in the late 19th century. The details are still with me but so cloudy that I will not attempt to put them down on paper. Dreams are like that, fleeting moments of reelection with no means to retrieve their true image of their insanity. Sometimes life is like that.

Italy is on my mind that is the music I have on. Rio nito a three legged monkey the hurdy-gurdy on a stick being the third leg. Reminds me of 'The Third Man'. But that was Vienna.

The Ladies potluck is somewhere in my mind also drifting around in there. I see it as I pass by, a gaggle of ladies. I envision something more. Grander than the usual events better food more camaraderie, but it will be no better. That is me always seeing the grand event the best circus the zoo extravaganza everywhere I go. Life is a ripe plum and if I can find its ripest sweetest treat I will be happy I can die happy. Really though it is like a meal but what I cook of it. Some of it is sweet some is tart there is even something bitter in there. Just to give it a little heartache. Yes I complicate it and I love that. It sustains me; the complicated compilation stew. It is the food of my life.

Dear Susie,

6/15/2014
After talking with you on the phone I let the dogs out put the leftovers away and set the pan the chicken was cooked in in the sink to soak. I have been considering a writing series in the form of letters and have set to trial two of them. Those where the last two I sent you. I wish to continue to send them to you if you are agreeable to that, the sending of them to you; you do not have to agree the writing of them that will happen despite you. My hope is that I do not burden you in any way.

The sun is beginning to dusk and the sky is turning red just a little.

In our phone conversation something crossed my mind in a flicker, and it is a thread I am going to fallow for a moment. Rather than being the exception, more like the norm, trauma damage destruction turmoil from childhood on is the way of most things most human things. Yes there are small pockets of un damaged goods but the damage seems to consist with the norm. From here to across the world around and around many times the wreckage continues. My good friend Sigmund Freud, I like to imagine him as a close personal friend of mine, like I have some privilege as to his thinking and his truth. Of course I do not I just imagine I do. Well, my buddy Freud was one of the early pioneers into the minds of those privileged damaged humans. From my perspective we here in America we white folks and most of all the minorities are part of that privileged class even if we are not a upper class. Damaged still but not like damage as in the third world or in those up and coming worlds maybe we should call them two and one half worlds. Don’t get me wrong it’s not like we are not deeply damaged but we are high class deeply damaged. Anyway damaged non the less no matter how polished we are.

I sure in the hell don’t want to see it don’t want to believe it but yet as I again go down that proverbial rabbit hole I can’t help but see it. I also see folks working though it getting things done big accomplishments world-class endeavors amazing things created yet much of that is done in insanity or at least neurosis. So I dig deep deeper into my solitude that place of my mind and accept my crazies as I say and I also say hay!! I did not kill anyone today. Not personally and then I look around maybe at the TV screen and there they are dead people … I see dead people and not like in that movie with ...um... I can’t

remember his name is it Bruce Willis - where he is a dead psychiatrist unaware of his own death. Am I dead is this just some kind of heaven-hell place. No ... I'm alive ... okay Danielle keep telling yourself that.

What track was I on... O, ya damaged people. I am not sure I want to go there anymore. Let's just say damage is part of the human condition. The level of that damage is kind of a personal thing and not all that important to the moments thoughts. It is just something there. It is what it is. It's in God's hands and all that third step stuff and don't forget to surrender to win.

A side thought as I roam down here: Two unconventional lovers accept and nurture each other within their individual solitude. Loving each other not as a man or a woman but as people, as human beings there solitude keeping them apart there love accepting. Their precepts of love of male female become meaningless, they do not get lost in the passion yet they are passionate they are lovers. Conventional ideas of romance sexual intercourse all drift away and they become the uncommon unit in a world where conventional notions of romantic love drives people insane or if not insane; dull, bewildered, lonely, or whittles over time.

Stopping now and coming back up to breath, to let the dogs back in the house and to maybe watch some TV and dull my senses.

Share with yourself your blessings be at peace my dear friend, all within you and around you is well, today you are loved and it will be so tomorrow.

Tonight, if you can, in your dreams fly over the wasteland and the monsters far below, find that green lush valley nestled below snowcapped mountains off to the west. See the castle in the middle of the sparkling village, go there to the great hall, I will meet you there along with all your dear trustworthy friends.

6/16/14

Transgender and the invisible father

The day after father's day leaves me bewildered. Seeing all the Facebook congrats all the kudos given to those individuals that fathered children seeing my son's congrats for his lovely twins my grandchildren seeing my son's grandfather receiving his due leaves me strangely quiet with desires not to make waves and yet inside I cry.
What others see as a choice that I see as saving my life has left me invisible as the individual that fathered my son. Maybe labeled as the 'bad father' even isolated alone and set aside. Okay this is my life, a trans woman with an adult child never to be recognized as father yet biology does not sever that tie. Marginalized as a woman as a trans woman. Marginalized by my family like the strange aunt or uncle asked underhandedly not to come to Christmas birthdays thanksgiving family reunions asked to stay invisible for the sake of the children but really it is others sensibilities sense of the norm that asks this of me. And I want to scream but drama is not my way so I abide them and show up the day after the birthday party the day after thanksgiving to show my regards to give my greetings and live invisible as the world would have it.
Is this my illusion my secret wish? I do not think so but will test it out seek the evidence, experiment accept what comes of it and if it is my making I will clean it up. If I have been labeled 'bad dad' 'secret shame' and if there are secret resentments held then it is not on me. As for my actions of the past, some deserve amends some not and amends I have made if they go unnoticed that too is not on me I will keep looking and clean them up as I go as I can. The rest is out of my hands. I will live my life clean, gently push forward and make myself known. I will reject others marginalizing me without forcing them to do anything. The shame is not mine. My life is mine to make as there's is too. I will walk with courage dignity and vigilance. If I am removed from fatherhood I will still be a father to a son a grandfather to the twins that is biology. If it goes undervalued hidden and denied that will not be done by me.

6/17/14

The case for pain and suffering

It's not like I don't know, it's not like I don't accept because I do.
It is a source of change the closer I bring it in the closer I take it on the greater the effect of change.
It does not have to unsettle or cause me to fall or be off my center.
It does not have to be an unstable drive or interfere in my life or make me run away or lose myself.
Unexpected pain or suffering is kind of like shutting my eyes to it being unaware that it, pain and suffering, is around all the time.
I wonder if denying being blindsided by unexpected suffering is some kind of denial of who I am and where I'm going. A kind of rejection of where the pain is taking me.
There is a fruit in pain and suffering I cannot see it now as it is happening, it will blossom way down the road. Faraway it will become part of who I am.
Accepting the pain and suffering as my own keeping it close sharing it very little maybe with just a neutral confidant, is the key. Not putting it on others to cause them to do something for me or evoke some kind of feeling from them that only burdens them. Letting that pain and suffering to go deep, become part of who I am, to rise up some long time away in an art or a character in some distant story, where its identification will tell a tale of something about what being human is.

6/17/2014

“To be an artist means: not to reckon and count; to ripen like the tree which does not force its sap and stands confident in the storms of Spring without fear lest no Summer might come after. It does come. But it comes only to the patient ones, who are there as if eternity lay in front of them, so unconcernedly still and far. I am learning it daily, learning it through pains to which I am grateful: patience is all!”
Rainer Maria Rilke
From the book I am currently reading ‘Letters to a Young Poet’

I hope this email finds you in good spirits and your week has been peaceful.

My weekend has been one of some challenges, not unexpected. I work though it mostly alone in solitude. Cleaning and researching my estate sale finds taking pictures getting listings ready.

So, you have been connected with the radio station there since 2003 working on programing, your skills must be pretty good. I have known that area is big on growing pot. I also have heard it is filled with creative people. As for "mixed results with creative people" I think that is common creative or not. People are funny that way. Mixed results I mean and egos too people have them big time. I gave up "battling it out" some five years ago but still get tangled up in that ego shit still to this day. Less and less though. My ego is like a sleeping dragon now… wakes up every once in a while and blows a lot of smoke. I never got used to that competitive thing that is why I work alone not paying much attention to the competition and when I am in the field (estate sales and such) I try to keep my blinders on and just look for the treasure right in front of me. And if you can produce even with all the crazies around that is great!

The paragraph in your last email about the 70's and the affair; going back to SF State getting teaching credentials; getting some career to pay bills; jumping to now with radio programing; turning 64 in August and ready to pull your hair out… that sure was a fast short and sweet telling of almost five decades. I enjoy hearing people's life stories but I am sure you left a whole lot out. If you want please fill me in with details. A little bit at a time if that makes it easier for you.
As rants go I don not think your rant to me was excessive unwarranted or troubling at all. It seemed rather valid and to the point. Also if you are like me when my father died that brought of all sorts of stuff from the past, seems kind of natural from what I have heard from others. I have no idea about other friends you have made I do know people are fickle, trebled living in their own pain, and the pain of others can causes people to act in ways that may seem inhumane, absent of a moral backbone I have been one of them. I have had friends like that too. I had to forgive myself and forgive them. I do what I can to be a better person today and hopefully I will be better tomorrow too. We all lose loved ones, some like you lose them

early in life no one understands not until they too have lost like that. Even so most people can't take others pain and processes it with love and kindness. That takes work, work most have no stomach for.

Sounds like you are reading for a move again, maybe back to Minnesota? I will look for those metal figures of cowboys and Indians, soldiers too and let you know when I get them.

A little piece of my story: A year and a half after my father and mother died I decided to change just about everything. I moved far away I did not have any friends but one and she moved out here with me. For the most and in just about every way I had isolated myself. I still to this day love my solitude I find creativity in my pain and my suffering. But I could not live a full life like that, I could not do life alone. So I reached out. I am not a religious person and I do not care for that crowd. But I did find some people living a spiritual life. Nothing complicated rather simple even. Meet up regularly have nice meals together talk about personal stuff keep the drama down to a minimum no one in charge chip in together to make things happen like beach parties, dances, music. I got out of myself slowly learned to care for others and let others care for me. We are all just people with our flaws and our good qualities too. We help each other find a better way to live and live a principled life. I am very fortunate to have found this. O and we are all recovering addicts and I am home.

6/22/2014

Good morning sweetheart, it is now five fifty two in the morning I have been awake since four am out of bed shortly after that. I had a wonderful time last night I was able to keep busy so I did not feel so out of place, that is the best part of hosting the potlucks. I can occupy myself with distractions of prep work. As so often is the case I was again compelled to share, and in my sharing the typical feeling of putting my foot in my mouth showed up as it is with all the times I share based on compulsion. "We are all going to die everyone we know is going to die we all suffer we all fuck up lots, so get over it and move on. Or if you can't move on just enjoy the pain. That's life. Most people don't want to hear that crap. What I meant to say, what I wanted to say and the only thing I should be saying is "I love you anyway, if there is anything I can do for you let

me know.” For sure I may not like you-all I may think you-all are idiots or some kind of wining self-centered bitches but I can leave that out of the narrative.
Mmmm coffee with half and half! Someone brought half and half and left it here how nice☺.
I will clarify, between sips of coffee, I too am a self-centered bitch I too have many moments of idiocy. I too swim in that pool. And why do we keep coming back to swim in these waters? Because we love the game. My parents loved the game life has taught me many nuances of the game and I am good at it. Sure the game may kill me but what better way to go than with me gripping a winning hand. Hay god forbid I put the cards down and leave the table. Them are sure fucked up analogies “the table” “the pool” hay wait a minute, pool-table, life is a game of pool! Well, I am glad I figured that out! Ok moving on to the next big question; “is there a god?”

6/23/14

Dr. OZ The Magic Bean and NA

The last NA potluck and recovery session has left me bewildered and somewhat frustrated. Let’s combine all the fun of a social soiree and the depressing therapy group with no therapist spiraling down to a feast of neurosis. I am left feeling helpless, and out of place. Felling out of place is common for me so I can deal with it, but helpless that is a tuff one. I could drift to ‘not caring’ or ‘disinterested’. I will stick with ‘helpless’ because that is the true feeling. I may not like it but that’s it.
NA is about getting clean staying clean and finding a new starting point to live life again. All the rest that has seeped into NA is bullshit crap clogging the pathway to our true goals and intention. The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is real its scope is limited. It does not deal with schizophrenia depression bipolar and other mental illnesses. The best we can do is guide others to qualified councilors in that regard. Nor can we help with legal matters, that too needs to be handled by professionals. Yes we can steer others in the right direction but the ‘advice’ we can offer is usually bad. The sick helping the sick has its limitations.

NA is not a magic bean dispensed by the wizard of OZ, something most of us dream of and seek in desperation and others use to con us.

6/24/2014
Keeping secrets and Satin's Revenge

The demons we crate within us know our secrets even the ones we keep from ourselves and they take their vengeance on us using those very secrets like the monk's flogging whip dropping us to our knees in pain to pray to a god in the hopes of keeping those secrets buried allowing us to take them to the grave. Leaving behind a life half lived shackled within the cage of those very secrets with Satin as the keeper of our key.

Dear Dan,
The Linked-in note about HO trains reminded me that I needed to set some time to write you. Much of the last two weeks was taken over by the preparations for a large potluck party at my house held Saturday this last weekend. The after cleanup is still going on. Over 30 women showed up, most I have some acquaintances with few are were friends and two were close friends. Most of the time went very well there was some bullshit but that is expected in such a large mix of people. Over all it was a lovely event.
For a time in the 1980's I worked for an auction house that dealt with estates of 'the dear departed'. I witnessed how a death in the family can tear relatives apart. More of a rip or shredding than a tear. Only in a very few instances did a family come together and wind up more united than before. At least you have your older sister, you are fortunate in that regard. My sister accused me of murdering my father and other foul deeds, in her hysterical moments. She did keep her principles and the estate settled amicably, though we do not communicate at all nor do I have much contact with any other family members.
I have never thought of myself as 'gay' yes with bisexual tendencies. So if I fit anywhere it is on the far end of the scale of GLBT. Even then GLBT is more of a political arm of a loose knit group of people that have little in common other than being odd and out of step with the norm. I have, for the most,

always been carful of who I have slept with, I am far more emotionally attracted to women than men, yet there are things about men I find exciting, but I am unwilling to go through a lot of hoops to attain that. Also I am not interested in compromising myself to be in a romantic relationship. My struggles to find myself to live in the body of my intention and temperament has left me a solitary being.
I will call you Thursday afternoon your time if that works for you. I have your number as 707-822-1372
Take care of yourself.

Danielle

6/25/14

Your feelings your emotions are just that. They are not you just part of you. They do not define you. They can guide you but not dictate you. The feelings and emotions will change.
Your actions stand as markers to your integrity for both good and ill, they define you most of all but not completely. In the scheme of things feelings move and change like the wind. Actions are like a large vessel in deep waters taking a long time to change course.
Question authority, question yourself, utilize sound experimentation and experiment again, then question the results. A leap of faith starts from a plateau of doubt there is no real faith without doubt and examination. Without that faith is hallow and dangerous.
Self-knowledge; the knowing that one does not fully know oneself, harmony between reason spirit and apatite; become yourself by doing brave and just and charitable acts; Some things are up to us most are not, knowing what is yours and what is not yours allows no one to coerce you or hinder you and you will blame no one. You will not do a single thing unwillingly. These are not my words but an accumulation of Plato’s Aristotle’s Cicero’s Epictetus’s and others.

7/2/2014

The subject is ‘The Fallen Sparrow’ a movie starring Maureen O’Hara and Walter Slezak, another TMC Nazi WW2 movie. So, who is the fallen sparrow? Is it her or is it him, well, it turns out

to be her and we thought from the start it was him. As I watch the movie, in between pauses and breaks I do my online class ‘Fundamental English Writing’. Today’s topic is: Noun and pronoun subjects. All of what I am studding comes somewhat natural for me though I do not know the names of what it is I do or how and why they work. So now I gleam a little and see as I type what is behind, or is it in front of, the meaning of my trivial sometimes lyrical wording. There are demonstrative, possessive, interrogative, indefinite, gerund and infinitive subject pronouns. Did I miss any? O yes, I did, the ‘understood you’. Please tell me if I missed any other. < That is an example of the ‘understood you’. The subject is you even though I did not use the word you in the sentence. Can you dig it? There are first person subjects second and third along with plural of all those. I love you she loves me they love us and yet no one is getting laid. What is ‘no one’? No one is the subject, and who is that on one. It’s not me or you or them or us or he or she. Is no one an it? Who is no one anyway. Do those no ones love me? If no one loves me am I still loved? If no one pricks me do I still bleed? Who knows! Who the hell is who anyway. I know that Who is on first base and the question ‘Who is on first base? Is a joke by Abate and Costello, a play on words.
Okay enough of this lit play.
Diane will be back in seven days and I can hardly wait for her return, not because I miss her and I do miss her, but because I am ready to turn her dogs back over to her. I am tired of looking after them, and looking after her plants too. I am very tired of that. There death would be a blessing to me, though I would miss looking at the lovely floral growth, so I keep them alive.

7/3/14

"Mother Nature is a serial killer. No one's better. More creative. Like all serial killers, she can't help the urge to want to get caught. But what good are all those brilliant crimes if no one takes the credit? So she leaves crumbs. Now the hard part, is seeing the crumbs for the clues they are. Sometimes the thing you thought was the most brutal aspect of Mother Nature, turns out to be the chink in her armor. And she loves disguising her weaknesses as strengths. She's a bitch." Andrew Fassbach

"Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or

beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we must be saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own standpoint. Therefore we must be saved by that final form of love, which is forgiveness."
Reinhold Niebuhr

"...Through history, people have gone back into their own pasts, sometimes to a precious time in their life, to their childhood, and often, the mind gravitates to a moment of shame, some sin committed, some act of selfishness, an act of omission, of shallowness, the sin of anger, the sin of self-pity, trying to be a people-pleaser, a lack of courage..." unknown

7/3/14
My constant bewilderment with learning the craft

Within my efforts to learn 'craft', in any of my avocations, I am left bewildered. Often, I take a step backwards as I strive to develop my skills. My focus goes from the heart to the head and I seem to lose the passion in my work. Yet I know even within my confusion that the learning will pass into a deeper part of my being and the heart will win out again, as it always has. That is my saving grace in learning a new craft.

7/9/2014 3:33am

Not even four in the morning and again it is recovery discovery. Wrapped in a blanket of gauzy white fluffy not even cotton but some other substance that is manmade not grown from the ground but produced from a machine.
The gauzy white fluffy substance keeps my skin soft my feet something so different than the barefoot child of just a hundred years ago. Those ancient feet hard and callused bare both in summer and winter.
Only fifty years ago Ken Nordine spoke words of "flibity jip" asking me what time it was when he woke at three thirty three in the morning. He like me was too on a discovery recovery. I wonder how far back does it go. Does it go into the hearts of the revolutionaries running around Boston in seventeen seventy

sixish? Dose it go back even further to Plato Aristotle and the rest of those fat cats in Athens Greece? Is that the place? Me in my pretend cotton shell protected, do I have feelings and questions just like those in the caves of my ancestors? What time is it?

4/9/2014
Dear Cathy,
I have been up for an hour, and will be picking up Diane from the airport shortly.
It was wonderful to see you yesterday. Even though I could tell you where in some discomfort, you seemed in good spirits. Also, with the sugary and the trials / tribulations of the past for or so months, maybe longer, you still have that sense of humble confidence that I admire. It still rings through you. I am inspired by it.
There is something to be said about and around 'staying clean'. For many years in your case some years in my case. It is a kind of trip or adventure that most are up to. I am not saying that 'staying clean' makes anyone special, but still it is different. Finding our way, for the most, we are on our own with only a few others in that common intent. Maybe everyone is in that boat too in one way or another, I do not know.
Anyway, I look at you, and over the last year, maybe it is my vision that has cleared some, and maybe some; you have been more open and revealing of your vulnerability, that I get a much broader picture of you, more precious more personal. I do also see the sold ground you stand on. It is rather remarkable to see that wider perspective of you and very refreshing.
My sense is all will be well, solid ground is beneath us and it will hold us.
Thank you for being in and part of my life. I am grateful to be part of yours.

7/14/14 did you know?

Did you know that ear-bud wires are eighteen inches long for a reason and no longer? Seems like some brainiac calculated that if ear-bud wires are longer than eighteen inches they will constantly get knotted up in your pocket or bag or wherever. But if they are eighteen inches or less they will consistently not get tangled up! Did you know that one in five women are raped and that we live in a rape culture? Funny how "they" figure out

how to keep your ear-buds from getting tangled up but can't figure out how to prevent rape.
I got back from my trip late Saturday night, and what a trip it was? I am still processing it. There was much I enjoyed and lots not enjoyed. A huge estate sale in Holly Springs Mississippi left me bewildered about my trade. There is another world out there, very competitive with very deep pockets, people who travel all over the country and the world spending small fortunes on art and antiques. Humility is a bitter pill. With my ego constantly placed up at the forefront of my life in so many ways, supported up by much of the precepts and beliefs I have created, the fall leaves me wounded. In business in art in the schema of existence I am a tiny insignificant drop. Looking back, seeing all the time I have wasted, all the energy placed on diversions just to get an inflated sense of self, I am struck by how pitiful I really am. And minuscule too. Don't worry I have such a big fucking ego I will muster up courage put on my armor and move on like the brave battered hero I am. I guess that is part of what egos are for, to keep us going. Wouldn't want to completely lose it.

7/15/2014

Last Thursday I headed out to Memphis to enjoy the culinary delights of Charles Vergo's Rendezvous Charcoal Ribs. Before reaching Memphis I had a stopover in Florence Alabama, the birthplace of WC Handy and the home town of the Rosenbaum's the original owners of a Frank Lloyd Wright house. Stopping in Florence was serendipitous, almost not happening. To my surprise, after an impromptu google search of the town, I saw a mention of the Rosenbaum house. Early the next morning I wander the quaint small collage town with one beatnik hippie style coffee shop; "not listed in any internet search", proudly boasted the bistro boy. The Rosenbaum house was nestled in a quaint traditional up sale neighborhood and look a little out of place, still it was a marvelous sight. I took many pictures inside and out. The WC Handy house, in stark contrast, was in a rundown neighborhood, consisted of one room and constructed from logs and stone.
Memphis like many large cities, was broken into districts tightly packed into a relatively small area around the down town section, where Rendezvous rib joint was. I found a nice hotel close by had the delicious rips and roamed downtown that night.

The next day I want to a bunch of garage sales and one estate sale, giving me an opportunity to experience the local community's flavor. Around eleven A.M. I headed to Birmingham. Before reaching Birmingham, I sopped at Holly Springs, Mississippi, near the Mississippi Delta. Historically Holly springs was mostly populated with cotton plantations and dependent on slave labor. Again serendipitously, randomly driving around, I ran into an estate auction of the 'Walter Place' an extravagant Southern estate. Harvey Walter built the pace in 1830, he was head of the Mississippi Central Railroad. I was humbled and dumbstruck by all the fine antiques, all the professional dealers from around the country in attendance and the size of the event consisting of three circus style tents numerous food vendors and a large security crew.
Birmingham downtown was a dump with one redeeming quality, the trendy 'Five Points' area a writer's paradise. Five Points was nestled just below the Hollywood Hills, yes Birmingham has their 'Hollywood Hills' too. Up and over the hill was the Hollywood district, still in the city limits, but the start of the well-to-do suburbs. I hung around 'Five Points for dinner and the photo opportunities.
The drive home was uneventful, though it did present a beautiful sunset behind me that eliminated the cumulus clouds in front of me.
I thought of you often on this trip, a piece of music on the radio a sight here and there would bring you to mind. There was a 'This American Life' piece that brought you deepest in my mind. It was about a person aging with some slight memory loss, trying to remember the love of his life and his difficultly in remembering the details, yet still deeply knowing that the love was important and one of a kind. Long gone but still meaningful even as it was slipping from his memory grasp. I thought to myself, "I may not be in love with you now, but once I was and how few I have been in love with, so very few. I never want to forget, even if it was short, it is a highlight of my life.

7/18/14
"There is a world of defense between being a woman and being an old female. If you're borne a girl, grow up, and live long enough you can become an old female. But to become a woman is a serious matter. A woman takes responsibility for the time she takes up and the space she occupies..." Maya Angelou

7/24/14

How time flies... it has been six days but it seems like just one since I last sat and wrote here.
It is hard to sleep, there is so much to do and I feel time is short. I want to fill it with so much, it is hard to know where to begin. I have my limits, my body is one my finances is another, so much to accomplish. All I can do is keep going and let life take me, be observant, not too critical, enjoy and rest when I need to. I was up at 5am it is eight now.

7/26/14
9:50PM
Just finished watching 'Silver Lining Playbook' strange, confusing, moving. The movie, like many things, brings me to that feeling; the feeling I am on the edge of something. I want to fall off and tumble down into the unknown. I am so ready. So much of my life is a repeated concern for those loves of my life those friends and relatives that I must shelter from my abrasive self my blunt hark of truth. The heartache of my existence my gritty soul crying out for that elusive thing that only touch will relive. Only love will quench romance deep in the heart clingy grabbing sucking the life out of you so I step back not wanting to kill you not wanting to harm and I kill myself harm myself instead. And it is only a movie only a story but it is my story, my movie, my tears running down my face as I jump off the cliff into the arms of the stones below chattering me into pieces into victory of some kind of lost love into some kind of freedom and peace at last in the loving arms of whoever catches my mind and loves it as they would love themselves and as I catch them as they fall too off that same abyss. And yes we dance hard intense in love in this, a dream. Is it real? The music plays on and I fallow it to my death and to my life.

7/28/2014
Dear Dan
What a whirlwind of excitement, work, and adventures since I last wrote to you. The highlight was a trip to Memphis. Most all of it was good some was frustrating.
First and foremost, I want to thank you for the CDs you sent me. They were a wonderful lifesaver during long stretches on dull highways. Not just on highways did the CDs give me audio enjoyment, but they also entertained me during rest stops and photo shoots.

Memphis was my number one destination on my vacation with stops in Birmingham, Holly Springs, and a slew of other small towns that at this moment I can't remember the names of. One of those town's was the home of the Rosenbaum's; native New Yorker's that migrated to Alabama. They commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to build them a home; a beautiful place. The town was also the birth place of C.W. Handy.
Memphis, like many large cities of the south and probably like many cities everywhere, have large stretches of run down beat up buildings and neighborhoods. Not that that can't be photogenic, but there is so much of it I get overwhelmed. Finding interesting bohemian neighborhoods can be a challenge.
After I got back from my "trip around the South" I had to get back to my listings on eBay. Every time I take a trip I have to let my listings end without relisting and every time I get back I play catchup and start listing again. It can take up to two weeks to start the sorely needed income flowing.
Last weekend I went to see the grandbabies; they are six months old now and very active. Yes, they are amazing and because they are relatives I am interested in them, but I do not find them so interesting that I want to spend a whole day with them. I don't think this is neurotic rather a temperament thing. I am not wired like most parents or grandparents. Still, I would do much to protect them, but I will do that for my dogs too. I do enjoy taking pictures and videos of them, dogs and babies. Sitting around watching dogs running and jumping for hours is enjoyable, but babies, I get board of their jiggling and wiggling in no time at all.
How have you been doing? Have you figured out where you will be moving too or if you are moving? Maybe now that you have some extra money you can buy a woman, you know one of those Russian mail order brides or something like that. Maybe just a weekend fling with one of those high end 'ladies of the night'. You know I pulling your leg yes? But who knows nothing ventured nothing gained. Just don't go down the 'rabbit hole' so far where you get lost and become a victim of some femme fatale.
That is it for now, let me know how you are doing.
Take care Dan
Kind regards from me to you.

8/1/2014

What if someone took over your life? Would anyone know the difference? If you could be somebody else would that mean you are no longer yourself? If you change into somebody different does that person you used to be die? Are we all just actors with nothing at the center, or is it just me and nobody else? As it goes I seem to be constantly changing and still stuck in something that calls me back, and each time I move away from that back place I drift further forward. The bounce back is less than the time before, just like gravity pulling less as I move away from the object that I am gravitating toward. As if the moon is slowly moving away from earth, and will in time fly off on its own. The habits and routines of my life become less and less important yet I still do them and much of my conscience has little if any reaction to them.
"Send me a few dollars now and then". All the things I need, outside of a few things, are useless with no real value. The work I do is so important to that part of me that wants to be productive; to have value; in the eyes of other's and myself. That is the aim of my work. Antiques and commerce that is my life's work. I am obsessed like it is food, and I have to have more; more all the time, and I want it to be important food. I want to be able to say "see what I am eating how good it is how valuable it is". For what? The 'real' me, not that me that is playing a part constantly looking into the mirror to see the caricature playing me that character in the mirror is not me. I am in the gilded gage with all the toys the actor gives me.

8/9/14
Being grounded in who I am. This requires me knowing who I am. What do I love? What makes my heart sing? What gets me up in the morning excited? What makes me satisfied and fulfilled? I have inklings of these things; some image of them, but not a crisp clear view. Not being completely rooted in the things that move me leaves me lacking in ability to produce things that are meaningful.

8/10/14
Dear Cathy

I hope all is well on your end, that our days are peaceful and that life is treating you with kindness. My days have been full, with some time to rest and take it easy but not much. I have left you a few messages on the phone that were short. This is the first time I have had to sit down, and send a more detailed

update as to how things have been going for me.

My trip to Memphis was a joy for the most, visiting two big cities Memphis and Birmingham along with exploring numerous smaller cities and town. I took lots of pictures and visited plenty of antiques shops estates sales and garage sales. It took, till just a few days ago, to get back in pace with eBay and get money flowing again. In between getting eBay back to normal I have been taking online lessens in English grammar, music fundamentals and Adobe tutorial lessens on Photoshop. I have been having some struggles with food, still I have kept my weight steady not losing any weight but not gaining either. I am working on changing my focus / obsession on food directing all that energy on things like exercising reading and my studies. My whole notion of food is screwed up, my thoughts and ideas around food come from movies TV and commercials where everybody is eating lugubrious meals fantastic deserts in abundance, where eating properly is a huge casserole with loads of cheese meat rich sauces and fat. Eating healthy is much different than I expected it to be. It is more of a routine with little swings or excitement. My need for excitement and excess has to come from other activities from activities that will not kill me. This is my life at the moment. It is changing I can see it, maybe in a year or so I will not be as focus on food as I am now.

Marie, one of my sponsies relapsed. She called me two days ago and showed up at just for Sunday'. We are starting on Step One again, having her call me every day, we will see how it goes. As for me recovery it is going well, I hope we can get together sometime soon to finish up with step six'.

That is it for now, I will call you soon, would love to chit-chat with you.

Take care, love you much and you are in my thoughts every day.

Danielle

8/11/14

Being grounded in who I am. This requires me knowing who I am. What do I love? What makes my heart sing? What gets me up in the morning excited? What makes me satisfied and fulfilled? I have

inklings of these things; some image of them, but not a crisp clear view. Not being completely rooted in the things that move me leaves me lacking in ability to produce things that are meaningful.

In no particular order: I love a good story, I love my solitude, I love the company of a dear friend, the sight of beautiful things, the feel of skin. I love most all music, the written word, the sound of words. I love the taste of sweet and salty and sower to a limit. I love the air and rain and wind and thunder and lightning I love being alive. I love a voice whispering in me ear softly. I love seeing a baby fresh and flower young a old tree. I love peace I love struggle I love harmony I love discourse. And there is so much more. All this is what makes my heart sing. All this and more is what gets me up in the morning what makes me satisfied fulfilled and thrilled.

I will digress, and hope you understand that in the next few words they are said with love. Yesterday an artist whose work I respect and love, Robin Williams, died. After a few moments of shock and then some understanding of the cause of his death it crossed my mind "What an ass hole". I am his elder by one year, his peer in so many ways. Yes I knew of his addictive behavior his struggle with depression. Still "what an ass hole" "what a dick". All the gifts he had all that life gave him it was still not enough. I wonder if his art, his talent was not really that, rather it was a burden a crying out for something he never got. A side product of his defective character. This does not diminish his body of work but it does bare the question; would he have been better off if he lacked his talent his wit his humor? Would his life have been more meaningful to himself without fame? Would I be willing to lose all that I got from his work in order that he may find real peace? I am hurt and I am angry. I, we, him, us, we all have so much and so many of us do not see it! What do we suffer with? What is this thing that drives many of us mad? I want to scream "get the fuck over it"! I wonder if we would be better off stuck in a cave struggling to find food every moment of the day then dying at thirty five from some simple cut. But we are not there we are here. So I scream "Do not go gently into that good night, old age should burn and rave at close of day; rage, rage against the dying of the light."

So my day goes on, my anger subsides still hurt and sad. I reflect and I know. I know, as my anger and my frustration drifted away, that nothing is as simple as I would like it to be no simple remedy to suffering and anguish we all face at times some greater some lesser than others. Looking down from my tall chair I see, I see the old wounds across my wrists those jagged scars and I can say I too am an ass and know what that means to constantly want to 'check out' 'jump ship' 'skip town' 'fly the coop' and all manner of sayings that indicates death is better than this if this is all there is. Again I say that was then and this is now and though I may still be an ass I have come around the corner saying there is more maybe not much more but there is more. It has only been some seven yours since I stopped killing myself, yes I know I am going to die but not by my hand or my mind or any of my doing. And I will say to all my living friends "you there on the sad height, curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray do not go gently into that good night rage, rage against the dying of the light".

8/19/2014
Last night I finished a group of essays short stories and two novels by Virginia Woolf. I say finished as opposed to red because much of the process was skimming speedily over and just skipping large sections. It was in the first story 'The Voyage Out' Chapter one that I found something wonderful, a short paragraph describing remarkably well one of the many human traits. The one described so eloquently and to the point was the human trait of disguise, the mascaraed of our clothing our poise and demeanor hiding the naked truth of what and who we are. Also the paragraph remarked on that adage that 'beauty is skin deep' giving it an extra layer of fabric and composure. It was that one paragraph that drove me on the read more but there was no more, no more that I could see or gleam from what I did see. As I read on I grew impatient, bewildered even. I red faster and faster till it became a blur yet I still picked up key words complete phrases here and there that might have had some true meaning to me. I stopped red closer but no they were not the fruit I was looking off. I jumped complete stories many chapters till I was at the end and wondered 'what the fuck!' Who is this 'Virginia Woolf' her claim to fame over many years. What is it that struck others but I could not find? Was it the pros of 'uncle captain of the ship' the so and so twinkle in the eye as he admired a young girls soft sweet skin of her arm as she reached across the sea salt stained table for the bowl of lush

ripe tomatoes brought down from upstream and purchased from a tattered present vendor of no distinction at all. I paraphrase. All the rest of those pros could not compare to the first, the one that ripped the vail off one of humankind's characteristics. So I leave Virginia Woolf with the question in my mind "What's up with that?" wondering about her notoriety her fame, wondering if it was her suicide her womanhood as a writer in a world of mostly men writers or was it her one or two paragraphs that stood her out. I knew of her at an early age her literature was touted as something great, and maybe it is, but I cannot see it. From the move 'who is afraid of Virginia Woolf' I imagined her work to be remarkable, rather it was the movie that was remarkable. All this is in my mind; I know her history her connections with early 20th century English literature. I will visit her again if time allows, maybe then my eyes will see something different. I conclude with this line, an important line that stands her with the great writers no matter what I feel "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." That holds true for just about anything not just writing fiction.

8/22/2014
Good morning Dan,
This is just a quick note to let you know I got the CDs! Thank you very much. I hope you are well and life is treating you good. It has been nothing but work and more work around here. My days slip by so fast I often turn my head, look back and wonder where they went, metaphorically speaking. The upside of this is I do not mull around in boredom. The downside is there is so much to do I do not have the time to do it all.
The dogs are up and need attention, the coffee is brewed and I need that. Take care friend I will write at length soon.
Regards

Danielle

8/26/2014
It isn't about the obsession around food or work or sex or any other thing I obsess about. Rather, it is about the act of obsessing in general. There may be some connection with a long held primitive nature, one of those natures that keeps mankind alive and continuing. Like many of those primitive natures it too may be obsolete, causing individuals or group of individuals

an early demise or much suffering. As we move in these ‘modern times’ obsession like stress can get us through a specific event a moment of accomplishment or need. Also like stress continuous and persistent doses of compulsion is often destructive to both mind and body. I think that a constant state of stress and compulsion is not a biological condition rather it is a cultural cause.
The constant and continuous stream of ‘high value’ impute from an early age has left me with an inability to tolerate boredom. That dreaded boredom: to be unoccupied; to be lacking in interest with my current activity. This is a state of mind that I fear above all other states of mind. Most likely I was trained in this fear. From early childhood drenched in activity through adolescence awash in visual and audio stimulus, through a box telling me all of life’s stories in a play of caricature and animation. Giant screens awash in light projected from a box far above my head showed me a life with nothing but make-believe adventure romance drama and comedy with some irony some parables and some morality that had a sense of realism but with no foundation in reality. At least not my reality, with parents struggling to maintain a statuesque, trying to deal with modern life, using drugs of all kinds to get by.
So here it is I find myself, less with stress much more with obsessions, struggling without the use of narcotics to deal with this ‘modern life’. I have learned to fill much of my day with rewarding activities, if not to others, rewarding to me. Still I am left with many hours of boredom to be filled with obsession and a work that is obsessive. Still the box fills my life with streaming stories and tales of drama comedy romance and tragedy. It is fair to say I still gleam most all that I know, most all that I believe from this method with the occasional book and the occasional story from a member of my fellowship. It is from the latter two that I find some hint of a solution or remedy. That remedy is prayer and meditation. Since, at this time, I have no faith in prayer it is meditation I will focus on and pursue. Maybe it is this meditation thing that will quiet my obsessions, we shall see.

8/27/2014
It is as I suspect, in all my current dreams and invaders, with the time I have left to live, I will fall short with most all of them. Yes some will come to pass in full bloom but most will suffer no fruit no reward. Yet I still will take on the

challenge, I will still pick up the mantel and carry on even though I know I will not meet the finish. Yes I shed tears at the knowing of failure the expectation is bitter and still I aim for the mark the bows gut taught tight to my cheek. Letting the arrow fly with no expectation of reaching the bull's eye, still I anticipate a clean strike. I carry on to that sweet end regardless of some bitters at the bottom of my glass. I carry on.

9/7/2014

Lost in Jersey City or how I found my way through a sticky wicket.

After moving to Jersey City, leaving everything behind, on the very first day or was it the very first week, I am not sure, I got lost in my apartment parking garage.
To start the story off my lovely car broke down in a crowed street just a few blocks away from my apartment. My neighbor, an old friend from my childhood, was kind enough to handle the breakdown for me as I was in a 'just too delicate' state of mind to deal with it. You know moving and all. The next day after having a good cry I went off to retrieve my vehicle. My neighbor was gone so he would be of no help and he had the keys! Not sure what I was thinking the car did not work anyway but for some reason I had to find it, maybe there was something inside of it I needed or maybe it was just the sight of that faithful friend, my car, would calm my agitated mood. Whatever it was I was on the hunt for that four wheeled filly. I could not find or remember the street where my baby broke down, all these dam Jersey streets looked the same and they were all so very crowded. I gave up looking for my car and went back to my apartment building. For a moment I could not find that either, that too distressed me, but I did manage to find it after a few trips around the neighborhood. By this time I was up for a drive. As I entered the apartment building I ran into Scuzzy Washe Harry the know it all of everything apartment. We talked some he flirted with me some then he said "why not rent a car, Joe Blow rents cars and he has a lot in the parking garage". "What a grand idea!" I told him and kissed him on his harry cheek, as you know he was Harry any way.
The parking garage was the parking garage for all the apartment buildings on the block and there were lots and lots of them,

apartment buildings that is, only one garage. It was a huge parking garage more than just a parking garage it housed numerous shabby businesses; nefarious businesses; along with many sole proprietors of dubious distinction. The garage was a labyrinth of cement, ramps, rickety stairs and untrustworthy elevators. I ventured in none the less. After squeezing out of a stalled elevator between two floors I ran into the greasy (not mechanical greasy rather slick Brill Cream greasy) Nito Vito aka Joe Blow car renter and distributor NOT par excellent by the way, but still kind of cute. "Cash up front on the barrel in advance pronto honey" he exclaimed emphatically, proudly even. But I had no cash. So I gave him that look, you know that look, that a girl can give a man and then she gets what she wants, you know. It worked but he made me sign a ten page contract that gave him my life forever and ever but I did not care those things never hold up in a court of law. I am such a smarty pants! So off I went to look for the rental in the garage. Space 8 6b blue section. Where the hell was that! On up a flight of stairs down another through a partially working elevator along a vast hallway and down a short few steps I ran into Mikey the doorman of my apartment building. We chatted pleasantly for a few moments and then he said "by the way I know where your car keys are, your neighbor gave them to Biki The Dicky, the gate keeper of the parking garage, and your car is somewhere in the garage". Why they call him Biki The Dicky I was told because he was a dick and his brother was a bike mechanic / seller who had a stall in the garage. Hurray! I was so happy. I headed straight to Biki The Dicky. Well not so straight there were plenty of twists turns and steps to getting there. Dicky handed me the keys "How the hell do I know where your car is!" he said in disgust as to my question. I almost cried just to make him feel bad but I decided not to because I think he felt bad enough as to being a gate keeper and all.

I walked around the garage with keys in hand for what seemed to be an endless amount of time, clicking the 'Lock' button every few steps listening for that familiar "beep beep" of the horn indicating all is well my car is locked up tight and found if it was lost. Alas I heard not "beep beep" and the battery in the key clicker was dying. It was just about then after crawling through another broken elevator and up another jury-rigged flight of dilapidated stairs that I ran into Biki The Dicky's brother Victor, the bike guy. I asked if I could sit for a moment and rest my weary legs. "Sure sweet heart" he said in a kind genital way not that usual slimy way. Victor went back to

fixing and polishing his bikes. I watched as his hands spun the wheels around his eyes checking the chain for proper tension the gears for accuracy. I watched and knew this was another artist at work. And like the wheel spinning around, so did my mind. “A bike a lovely red or green or light blue bike! Why not a bike?” I thought to myself. I also thought Victor was thinking the same thing. That is the way to go through this crowded maze of a city. That is the way around all the bustle and hustle of my life. On two wheels powered by me! I cut a deal with Victor willy-nilly and rode off on a not so new, lovingly restored bike. “Enjoy yourself honey bunny” Victor said in a genital way with a hint of flirtation. I looked back and smiled in a genital flirtatious way.

9/8/2014
My savage hunger.

As I float through yesterday to today and into tomorrow it is my savage hunger that dominates my day to day existence. It is not everything but it is a lot.
Food; the eating of it the controlling of it often successful sometimes not is in all ways an obsession. A hunger that wants to ravage and consume in extreme excess haunts me. I bitterly fight it off resenting its power and its effect on me.
There is a light off in the distance. A light of freedom from that specter. The specter that is just to the side of my vision hard to make out but ready to pounce. I try to focus on that light ahead to be in it at all times. I fail miserably.
The light is this: savage hunger is gone if I am hungry it is only in the body not the soul. The body knows the difference from hunger and starvation. The soul is at peace with the bodies hunger and nothing is craved, hunger is placed on that shelf of waiting needs that will be fulfilled in time with no worry or concern. Placed silently comfortably patient and the rest of life goes on my work uninterrupted goes on and when the time comes to sit before the food of earthly existence it is a grace a small celebration of living a gift to savor. Something to enjoy in grateful acceptance in silence and calm. I long to be there in the light every day all days and all ways. It is my soul’s goal and my body’s need.

9/17/2014

As I rediscover Charles Dickens's "Great Expectations" and as I watch Ken Burn's PBS series "The Roosevelts" I get a glimpse into the past and a look at aristocracy class and culture of another age. How alien those times, just a few generations ago, seem to me. With my mid to late twentieth century upbringing it has been hard not to see it as a fairytale. This is not to say that I believe aristocracy has not existed or that it has not been with us all along. It is just hard for me to see it as something real.

For me, my experience is with that large middle class that developed after world war two. Sill a working class but with mobility education and well paid. This class, especially in America, encompassed the majority of people in western society from the nineteen forties on through the rest of the twentieth century. Here in America we seemed invincible and culture was our domain our dream was to rise above our class and gain something of that imaginary aristocratic life; privilege and leisure; an appreciation of the arts and access to education. The things once held for only the privileged few.

These short lived decades of a thriving middle class were handed to us by our parents, our parents of the depression and the war. It was everything to us. In the nineteen sixties we took it to its cultural heights in music, art, writing and poetry. We created our own culture our own drugs. Nothing was going to stop us. But our background did not provide the breeding the refinement that comes with generations of an established elite. The best of education and privilege was still out of reach for most of us. There were pretenses of these things that could give us the illusion of nobility. These things were mass produced for us with just enough glitter to capture our eyes and our minds; large estate like homes, fast expensive cars, fine designer jewelry, clothing with labels that resembled royalty on our lapels, fancy prep schools. All this to let everyone know we were 'better than'. Some of us even found positions in work that made them millionaires reaching the heights of their upper middle class. In a short time the millionaires grew in numbers and a million became something 'less than', the mark became a billion. So we aged in our class; some moving higher most just barley maintaining some tumbling into poverty.

As we live in our world, that is everything to us, the gentry' class quietly carries on. Families of wealth and production over generations hold their grip on power and influence. Yes there are individuals that work their way into an immense fortune from all classes of life but they found out, like everyone before

them, real wealth and power is possessed not over one lifetime but many lifetimes and their progeny will need to inherit something grater then the sum they themselves hold in order to maintain their aristocratic dynasty.
So here I am with Dickens with the Roosevelts and seeing the world around me with a little more clarity, seeing my place within it with a little more humility. Like the affable Joe in 'Great Expectations' not fully grasping the world around me but seeing a sense of order in it all. With the good and the ill having its place in that order. Also like Pip with my envy and my passions driving me to my own great expectations.
In the end it is about me working to have balance and acceptance with today and still strive on to find something better than today without expectations.

9/28/2014
This morning I woke from a dream where in it I was very old senile and in an impoverished senior facility. Within the dream I was not so troubled, a little confused and drifting in and out of understanding who or where I was but not troubled.
When I woke up at six thirty AM that is when I became troubled. I woke up afraid of my future and even in the dream when I did not feel alone or lonely when awake I feared I would be.
My dreams, maybe not all of them but that one for sure, project to some future rather some imagination of a future. That future is tied to some primal fear deep within me that I am often not aware of, none the less it is in me. How primal it is I do not know nor do I know how worthy of examination it is.
It is now seven zero five AM, and a few cups of coffee ago, I feel much more in the present, aware of my surroundings, lucid and free of that momentary fear when I first woke up. Maybe that is all that matters. Maybe exploring that primal fear, the loss of self, is futile and a waste of time.

9/29/2014
Dear Friend,
All is well around here, life, for the most, is productive and fulfilling. The days the weeks and months fly by very quickly. Not sure why maybe it is just how the third act is going to go for me.
I did a four day antique show that was very successful, eBay has picked up quite well after school started in September. Consequently I am paying the bills with a little extra for

savings. I have been working on my photography getting some nice prints for my efforts. Not writing as much as I would like but am reading much more.
I like the still life you attached to the email. It seems alive and playful, rich with color.
Are you thinking of moving to Virginia? I do not think you need to be rich to live there. I have a friend, she is not rich and she has a nice older home. She moved from California and likes it there.
I enjoyed DC some. I did see a few of the monuments without the hassle of big crowds. I will go back and give it another chance.
http://stores.ebay.com/MsDzAntiques That is the link to my eBay pages. Search around all of eBay you may find what you are looking for.
Take care of yourself
Hope to hear from you soon.
Danielle

10/3/2014
I think it was Einstein that said "Reality is an illusion". Reality is also ambiguous, what it means to me today is not what it meant to me yesterday. Statements of fact or the image of myself that I made in the past no longer hold true today. Once standing in a resounding 'NO' now is a quiet 'yes'. Once awkward and repulsive today is familiar and embraced.
My reality is an illusion. As I face it I must accept my own fallacies today that were once solid conceptions.

10/11/2014
Dear Susie
A quick note to express a miner but nagging concern: I hope my anxiety over my own financial situation did not sway you to decide not go to the NA convention is Nashville. In any event I am not going to that convention and that is all I should have said about it.
11/13/2014
Pamela Meyer says "On any given day we are lied to from 10 to 200 times." She makes a compelling case to support that statement in her books and her TED talk. In the TED playlist "Our Brains: predictably irrational" others make a compelling argument that many of those lies are ones we tell ourselves. Deep down long held beliefs, vital to our stability, are constantly reinforced for the most part willingly some not so willingly. All this is not new, philosophers artist and

scientist have been struggling with this notion since Plato and Aristotle, probably earlier.
Within the profound changes I have made in my life, I have had to face the reasons the motives the whys of my actions that precipitated those changes. What I found is that the reasons motives and whys were vast yet shallow hallow and ambiguous. I had to face that awful truth and yet I still carried on regardless of the suffering the loss and all the ramifications of my decisions.
Still to this day I can plainly see that most all I do has no foundation in any 'real' belief or faith. That most all I am is within an illusion. That most all I see hear and feel is ambiguous holding many meanings. And most of those meanings are also illusions, some very dangerous.
Yet I find myself with much joy in living, joy in friendship family and society, and like many of the 'reasons why' there is no real reason why I find myself with joy. It just is and I gratefully accept it. I still struggle with my choices my beliefs my place in the world, all in all today it is a tender trap with lots of avenues for distraction and exploration.
As for my family and my fellowship it too is filled with illusions and ambiguity, but I am very fond of the people in it; feel the need not to be alone and I see no reason to be angry or frustrated with the meaning others place on it, even though at time those feelings do come up.

10/23/2014
10:40 pm I have been busy since seven this morning. Lately I have been compelled to be "productive" not sure that is the correct word but it will do. Even though I am more pleased and comfortable being busy I do need to take time to also relax. Tonight I am watching the movie Godzilla.

Over and out I say as the monsters play around and about my head, dreaming in a TV vision of Hawaiian beaches. From there the monster hunters fallow the trail to the Golden Gate and San Francisco then on to a Nevada desert where sand turns to glass from the heat of the sun and the breath of Godzilla. O yes and Elvis a musac tune in the elevator of a Las Vegas hotel as some giant bug looking thing chews off the top floor.

10/24/14 9:25PM

Age nine or so, in a church of my catholic grade school, I was up in the rafters overlooking the other students rehearsing for their conformation. I was already confirmed. As a military brat of catholic parents I was confirmed when baptized. The thinking was that if we died in some far off place we would enter the gates of heaven as good catholic children. Looking down wondering where god lived and wondering if all the other children down below thought like me. Did they too question god's existence?

It was not the newly discovered fact that people were suffering as a loving God sat back and did nothing but that did add some skepticism. I wanted to believe. For the most it was that I could not feel the presence any God. That is what caused me to question the existence of God.

Years later I ventured into drugs LSD being my favorite. It was exciting and in the back of my mind I hoped the traces and tracks of light that streamed around me would take me to God. Images of things that seemed real drifting by my vision and in the corner of my eye was that God? I hoped.

Many years of searching and still no God. I drifted on deeper. Magic mushrooms peyote more LSD trips that took me through and around the world and no God for this child. No God to bless me to save me or love me. I wanted that God and I thought if I could just believe just had faith. I went my way kept hoping reading metaphysical transcendental religious books, kept using narcotics with some vague wish for them to work to let me see or feel God. No ghosts no angels or devils no delusions in that part of my brain while most all around me had a rapture that eluded me.

I stopped chasing the traces of light that fallowed my hand in illumination. I knew the truth, it was just some chemical touching some nerve in my head, no finger of a specter no super natural event other than those hallucinations induced by drugs so I stopped. Even with all my desire to believe I could not so I stopped chasing the tail of some mystical dragon.

In my clarity of self-imposed abstinence from pursuing ecstatic sensations of mystical revelations, that come so close to God but missed the mark, I heard something. In that clear head that holds a mass of something I heard a nostalgia that was there

since I was young, a longing. I felt it and it may have been nothing more than my own delusion my own deity with no real power. A sound of brass cymbals and horns a noise that people make backed up by a wind that blows in the trees and through a clarinet to make a sound, a human sound that no God has ever made in my ear. So sweet it is that I cry with both joy and sorrow. It is a sound of us all of us in so many ways of crating and God is still nowhere to be found except in some delusion I cannot accept. And the delusions I do accept have no room for false idles no room for gods of no substance. So the tracks I see today the patterns in the corner of my eye are of music and light flickering on a screen. The amazing thoughts within my body brain and that thing I call a soul, that thing I only think about, they are not real just imaginary as god is, only sparks of electrochemical activity in my cortex.

I turn my head away from my gut and I look around. I love life more than I could ever love any deity in all of the imaginary heavens. In the music that once came from an orchestra some time ago in some other place that once played on a machine with a needle now playing on a iPhone with buds in my ears there is something more real than imagination. The love that no god could ever make me feel, that sound in my ear causes me to feel. Is it real, I know the sound is, not sure about the love but I trust that sound coming into my head more than all the gods more than all the drug induced revelations and induced moments of ecstasy. For me there is life and what I have made of it up to now. Am I blessed? I do not think so but I do think I may be fortunate.

10/28/2014
My relationship with Narcotics Anonymous:
My relationship with the people of NA has become my strongest human tie. To get some perspective on this my ties to humanity in general are rather week. I do not feel a likeminded connection or a kinship with all of humanity. I do have a general likeminded connection with the fellowship of NA, for the most we are all recovering addicts. There are a few that I am likeminded as to faith. NA offers opportunities to work and associate with others without the fear of being ostracized in general, giving me an opportunity to explore feelings beliefs and actions while recovering a meaningful life. The fellowship also offers a mentorship relationship that I find very valuable in my life’s journey. The relationships I have developed within my fellowship has afford me a lose nit portion of accountability

that constitutes a ‘second set of eyes’. That said like most fellowships NA can be dogmatic, ritualistic and prone to magical thinking. With some of the principles of NA one can dismiss these characteristics, even though the fellowship has a measure of peer pressure. It takes me a constant effort to resist these pressures and that is on me not my fellowship. Indeed the fellowship is designed in such a way to allow for the choice of precepts and beliefs to fallow or disregard.

11/6/2014
It is in my case that meetings in the aria of mandatory attendance by whatever means becomes a distraction even more it becomes a styling repulsive hindrance.
I may want to believe in the ritual repetitive chants but I cannot. The more I attend the more that hallow empty feeling grows. Listening over and over the magical words that have lost all there magic I look around at the faces of my fellows and wonder of my own delusions and as a child I want to embrace them and as an adult that embrace is the clinging of something long lost and the pressure of the rituals call out to stay to believe but I do not believe and I wonder how string are the ties that bind me to my meetings. How strong are they compared to my ties to my fellows? I answer that it is my fellows I wish to worship and praise not the words of magical prayers. The ritual is as hollow to me as my church of old where as a child I wandered in and even then I wondered for the meaning of it all and found none. So it is the people that hold meaning not their delusions. Now how much is in me to please my fellows, to have their affections? How important is it for the wind to know that it has an effect on the face of mankind? Or how much does the bird need another to hear its song?
If my fellows, to be my fellows, need me to believe, how much will I surrender of myself to stay within the warmth of their fellowship? How much will I accept the delusion that I see as nothing more than hallow words and at times lies?
Back to the task. In the midst of mandatory attendance of meetings I grow less interested more resentful and unfulfilled. Whether that mandatory imposition is self-imposed or imposed by another it does not matter. Better for me to reject the imposition and fallow my will my heart. If I do not I will eventually run away or maybe not but I will never know my true level of commitment to others or myself.

True human freedom comes when one can act to be true to self regardless of the reactions of all that they love. Whether it be people or beliefs.

11/9/2014
When I see a small slice of life someone's life or mine whether joyous or sorrowful and that slice touches my heart I cry. I cry because I know I am alive, alive for a very brief amount of time and I had better grasp it feel all of it for if I do not I am gone from it already missing the full measure of life, both its pain and pleasure.

11/15/2014
Some quotes from the unknown and the known.

"We are here to witness the creation and abet it. We are here to notice each thing so each thing gets noticed. Together we notice not only each mountain shadow and each stone on the beach but, especially, we notice the beautiful faces and complex natures of each other.

The human species has inhabited this planet for only 250,000 years or so-roughly.0015 percent of the history of life, the last inch of the cosmic mile. The world fared perfectly well without us for all but the last moment of earthly time

I have been asking myself why I'm here most of my life. If there's a purpose I don't care anymore.

A wise man once said that all human activity is a form of play.

No why. Just here.

Do not despise your inner world. That is the first and most general piece of advice I would offer

Afraid that our inner light will be extinguished or our inner darkness exposed, we hide our true identities from each other

When we understand integrity for what it is, we stop obsessing over codes of conduct and embark on the more demanding journey toward being whole.

By posing the unanswerable questions of meaning, men establish themselves as question-asking beings.”

Danielle Swain
1355 Lansdowne Ct. SW
Marietta GA 30008
12/06/2014
Dr. Lenna Dutta
Visiting Nurse Health System
1244 Park Vista Dr.
Atlanta, GA 30319
Dear Dr. Lenna Dutta:
This letter is in reference to Client Steven Klahr Winterberry Cottage Room 27 and a minor incident occurring 12/06/2014 8:30 AM during the administration of his medications and taking of his vital signs. Steven was somewhat “agitated” and requested that his meditations be given to him one at a time and not at the same time as checking his vital signs. His agitation was not extreme or persistent and no multimodal interventions were exercised by his nurse and his aid rather sedative medications were the first choice of intervention. Now I am no expert but I am also no novice with care for patients as they die. Yes relief of physical distress is the highest priority, but I do not think simple normal agitation should be met right from the start with sedative medication. While physical comfort is the first priority, psychosocial spiritual and existential distress are also common among dying persons and demand a caring adult to adult response. From ASCO.org: “The dying process creates a myriad of questions and concerns about the meaning of life. People confront and resolve these questions and concerns in their own ways.” Some agitation seams normal to me. Some requests from patients to “slowdown” my interrupt the work flow of the staff and may agitate nurses and aids but that is not a good reason to label the patient as “agitated” and to use chemical sudation as a first choice.

Abstract
Cancer care extends from diagnosis through the late stages of advanced illness as patients confront dying and their families cope with caregiving and grief. Palliative care is a rapidly developing area of clinical focus that offers valuable services to patients in terms of symptom management and adjustment to illness, including issues of life completion and life closure. It is often appropriate to offer certain elements of palliative care early in the course of illness. As disease progresses, physical comfort and enhancing quality of life increasingly become primary goals of cancer care. Specialized palliative care programs, epitomized by hospice, are invaluable resources for patients with far-advanced illness and their families.

Current regulations and prevailing payment structures limit access to and the scope of hospice services and highlight the need for innovative models of delivering and financing palliative care.

Introduction

Clinicians working in the field of oncology routinely encounter patients whose illness progresses despite intensive efforts to extend life. While there have been important advances in cancer care over the past several decades, and recent remarkable progress in treating a few specific neoplasms, approximately half of all current cancer patients will eventually die as a consequence of their illness or related complications. Caring for people as they die is, therefore, an integral part of oncology practice.

During the latter half of the 1990s, a series of studies documenting serious deficiencies in symptomatic care of patients with far advanced illness and the public debate over legalization of physician-assisted suicide have dramatically raised professional and public awareness of the urgent need to improve care for dying persons.

Physicians have cared for dying patients from earliest antiquity. Given the sophistication of contemporary medicine, it seems ironic that this core clinical responsibility has never been more difficult for physicians to discharge than it is today. In part, the current perplexities of caring for people as they die derive from the dramatic advances in curative and remissive treatments. Illnesses, such as cancer, that would have quickly ended life as recently as the first part of the 20th century can now be well treated and, even those that cannot be cured, are often satisfactorily managed for years. The phenomenon of chronic illness with an associated prolonged period of decline is now a prevalent trajectory of dying. Indeed, a large majority of people living today can anticipate dying at an advanced age, from consequences of a disease with which they have lived for months to a number of years.1

In the report of its comprehensive study of the state of end-of-life care in America, the Institute of Medicine concluded that serious deficiencies exist in clinical practice, in professional training, and in the resulting attitudes and assumptions of professional caregivers. The study also noted inadequacies in the existing scientific evidence base for palliative care and acknowledged obstacles that diminish access to and quality of end-of-life care arising from existing health care policy, financing, and modes of health care delivery (Table 1).2 The report by the Institute of Medicine concludes with a set of recommendations that respond to these deficiencies (Table 2).

Table Table 1. Domains and Deficiencies in Care at the End of Life

Consistent with these recommendations, the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) recently approved a statement of policy and

principle entitled, “Cancer Care During the Last Phase of Life.”3 This important document repeatedly emphasizes the multidimensional nature of the illness experience and stresses the importance of continuity as a principle of cancer care.

“The American Society of Clinical Oncology believes that it is the oncologists' responsibility to care for their patients in a continuum that extends from the moment of diagnosis throughout the course of the illness. In addition to appropriate anticancer treatment, this includes symptom control and psychosocial support during all phases of care, including those during the last phase of life.”3

This statement calls to mind the anonymous adage from the Middle Ages: “To cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always,” which succinctly and powerfully conveys the essential principles of the clinician's role.4

Caring for Patients As They Die

The principal responsibilities of physicians to dying patients are straightforward. Symptom management is primary. The nature of being mortal guarantees that there will come a time in each person's life when death will prevail. Medicine cannot always prolong life, but contemporary knowledge and medical skills can assure people of being protected from extremes of physical distress. In far-advanced illness, when cure is no longer possible and extension of life is increasingly difficult to achieve, relief of physical distress becomes the highest priority.

Table Table 2. Recommendations and Future Direction

PAIN RELIEF

Pain is the cardinal symptom associated with advanced cancer. In common discussion, the word “pain” often is used to symbolize a range of symptoms, such as dyspnea, fatigue, confusion, nausea, tenesmus, dizziness, and itching, all of which can cause suffering among dying patients. Emotional symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, are also all-too-common sources of suffering.

Satisfactory control of symptoms can usually be achieved with a direct, organized approach. First, when feasible, treatment is directed at ameliorating the pathophysiology of the illness. Additionally, analgesics and analgesic adjuvants can diminish the experience of nociception.5,6 While eliminating all discomfort arising from extensive, multi-system illness may not be possible, through assiduous evaluation, attention to detail, careful explanation, and continuous monitoring, physical distress among dying patients can always be alleviated.7,8

Even in those rare situations in which extremes of pain, air hunger or agitation persist despite intensive, multimodal interventions, the use of sedative medications can provide reliable relief of physical distress (see Cherny, page 70). Pharmacologic sedation can be employed

pending interventions such as nerve blocks, surgical neurolysis, or fixation of long bone fractures. When death is imminent, sedative medications can be continued along with meticulous nursing care through the patient's demise.9–11

EMOTIONAL ISSUES

While physical comfort is the first priority in treating a dying patient, it is not the only goal. Psychosocial and spiritual or existential distress are, of course, also common among dying persons and clearly demand a caring response. The ASCO statement noted, "The dying process creates a myriad of questions and concerns about the meaning of life. People confront and resolve these questions and concerns in their own ways, frequently but not exclusively through religious and philosophical beliefs. Increasingly, those who care for the dying find that spiritual and existential issues are central to the quality of patients' lives as they near death."3

ASCO repeatedly emphasizes hospice care as an important and underutilized resource in its statement on caring during the last phase of life. "ASCO believes that hospice is a widely available and excellent model for managing end-of-life care and should be better utilized … As the best available model of end-of-life care, hospice must be positioned as a valid, therapeutic alternative to continuing futile, disease-oriented therapies."3

The Role of Hospice in Caring for Cancer Patients

Hospice is hardly a new phenomenon. In the US, the first hospice program was established in 1974. Currently, there are more than 3,000 licensed hospice programs, serving over 450,000 patients a year.

In the 1994 Standards of a Hospice Program of Care, the National Hospice Organization defined hospice as a model for providing palliative care. "Hospice offers palliative care to all terminally ill people and their families regardless of age, gender, nationality, race, creed, sexual orientation, disability, diagnosis, availability of a primary caregiver, or ability to pay."12

The statement continues by defining palliative care in terms of its goals. "The National Hospice Organization defines palliative care as treatment that enhances comfort, and improves the quality of the patient's life."12

This characterization is consistent with a seminal World Health Organization (WHO) technical report on cancer pain relief that defined palliative care as, "The active total care of patients whose disease is not responsive to curative treatment. Control of pain, of other symptoms, and of psychological, social and spiritual problems, is paramount. The goal of palliative care is achievement of the best quality of life for patients and their families. Many aspects of palliative care are also applicable earlier in the course of illness in conjunction with anticancer treatment."13

GOALS OF ONCOLOGY AND PALLIATIVE CARE

As can be seen from such statements, the goals of oncology and palliative care are well aligned. Palliative care represents a valuable set of specialized services that complement ongoing physician-directed care aimed at disease-modification and comfort. Hospice has epitomized palliative care for patients with far-advanced illness. Hospice programs gather physicians, nurses, and professionals from clinical social work, pastoral care, pharmacy, the supportive therapies (physical, occupational, respiratory, and dietary) together with home health and bath aides into an interdisciplinary team dynamic and collaborative process of care. Each team member brings the perspective and expertise of his or her discipline, as well as a unique personal and clinical experience, contributing his or her efforts and talents to the goals of comfort and improving the quality of the last phase of a cancer patient's—and family's—life.

Hospice programs also draw upon a pool of trained and supervised volunteers to offer a myriad of mundane yet essential services. Volunteers also offer companionship. In the midst of the inherent loneliness and isolation of dying, hospice volunteers listen and bear witness to the individual's fears, disappointments, and triumphs.

BEYOND SYMPTOMS AND SUFFERING: LIFE REVIEW

While clinicians must attend to the multiple sources of discomfort and despair among the dying, the experience of living with progressive, life-limiting illness cannot be understood solely through a framework of suffering. Beyond the inevitable problems of terminal illness, this waning phase of life also encompasses opportunities for life review, life completion and meaningful closure that can profoundly enrich the quality of the person's remaining days—and affect the lives of family members for many years to come.14

Compared with a sudden death, dying of progressive illness offers a chance not to leave things “undone” and to do what is necessary to put one's affairs in order. An anticipated death affords the opportunity to reconcile previously strained relationships and a chance, once again, to tell one's treasured stories.

As the activities and responsibilities of busy life fall away during progressive physical and functional decline and as life's end looms ever closer, it is common for people to explore questions of ultimate meaning. Issues surrounding the existential dimensions of life and death are not only sources of suffering. In exploring the place of human beings in the universe and questions related to the existence of a caring god or of an afterlife, many people find spiritual comfort and strength. Matters of this nature are on the minds of many seriously ill patients. In striving to support people in this realm of life, the clinician's role is not to provide answers; rather, it is to listen and help people find their own answers. Here, too, hospice teams offer a valuable service.

One of the precepts of palliative care is that dying is considered a normal stage in the lives of individuals and families.12,15 A developmental approach to this stage of life offers a perspective from

which clinicians can assist people in identifying ways of working toward a self-determined sense of completion in personal, interpersonal and spiritual realms of life.14 Within this framework, sources of emotional and spiritual distress can be explored and care planning can incorporate a focused response without the experience of the patient or family requiring a diagnosis of psychosocial pathology. An important monograph from the Standards and Accreditation Committee of the National Hospice Organization outlines a “treat, prevent, promote” intervention strategy. In approaching a dying person and family, the most immediate responsibility is to treat immediate sources of suffering, whether they are physical, emotional, social, or spiritual. Next, the team focuses on preventing foreseeable problems and complications. Finally, the palliative plans of care also include opportunities that promote growth for patients and families, individually and together, during this final stage of life.16

ACCESS TO HOSPICE

The best hospice programs have collectively established benchmark practices and clinical outcomes against which other models of palliative care can be assessed. However, hospice has not been immune from problems of access, uneven quality and limitations of service imposed by financial constraints that plague the US health care system.

As recognized by the Institute of Medicine report and the ASCO statement, currently hospice is an underutilized resource in the care of people with advanced, incurable illness. When the Medicare Hospice Benefit was adopted by Congress in 1982, an appropriate length of hospice service was anticipated to be in the range of six months. Recent data reveal that average lengths of stay are in the range of just 30 to 45 days and median lengths of service are as low as two weeks.17,18

Many physicians remain only minimally familiar with hospice services, and tend not to refer patients who, with their families, would benefit from the services hospice offers, or who refer very late, often just days before a patient's death. Patient attitudes, fears, and misconceptions heavily contribute to these referral and utilization patterns. Even when the far-advanced extent of illness is acknowledged and despite full disclosure of the risks of continued life-prolonging therapy, many patients actively resist a referral to hospice opting, instead, to purse aggressive disease-modifying treatment.

Oncologists often are in a critical position to assure people that hospice does not mean abandonment. Physicians can give evidence of the continued importance of their relationship with the patient and the continued value of the patient's life most basically by listening to peoples' fears and sadness. It is appropriate for clinicians to express their own disappointment and sadness at the progression of illness and to emphasize their continued commitment to caring. Within this context, referral to hospice can be introduced as an expansion of resources and caring people, as well as a higher level of support.

CURRENT LIMITATIONS OF HOSPICE IN THE US

Although in principle, life-prolonging and palliative care should be well-integrated in a smooth continuum of care, the current payment and delivery systems impose barriers to this goal. While the Medicare Hospice Benefit and the companion Medicaid Hospice Benefit that exist in most states have fostered dramatic growth of hospice, they have limited the scope of hospice services and contributed to a fragmented system of care.18 Federal oversight of the Medicare Hospice Benefit has focused on ferreting out fraud and abuse, through Focus Medical Review and through Operation Restore Trust, an investigation conducted by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the Department of Health and Human Services.19–21

The OIG ultimately concluded that instances of frank abuse are rare and that, "overall, the Medicare hospice program seems to be working as intended."22 Nevertheless, Operation Restore Trust has had a limiting effect on patients' access to hospice and, therefore, to palliative care. Commenting on the OIG final report, Karen Davie, President of the National Hospice Organization, expressed the dismayed perspective of the hospice programs in observing that, "The OIG's intense scrutiny has had a chilling effect on appropriate referrals of terminally ill beneficiaries and resulted in gross under-utilization of hospice services."23

Yet problems with access stem from more than just a reluctance on the part of referring physicians. Many hospice programs, perceiving a threat of retroactive denial of payment or even stiff fines for having patients live too long, have become more selective in accepting patients. Programs may be reluctant to admit patients whose principal diagnosis is characterized by slow, progressive decline, despite serious disability (such as in Alzheimer's dementia) or those whose disease course is marked by life-threatening exacerbations interspersed between periods of relative stability, such as in congestive heart failure or chronic pulmonary disease.24

This tragic trend impacts care of patients with cancer as well. As advances in oncology offer valuable palliative options to extend and improve quality of life for patients with far advanced illnesses such as ovarian cancer, breast carcinoma, and certain lymphomas, existing regulations and payment structures limit access to the comprehensive programs of palliative care that hospices represent.

Another adverse effect of the prevailing regulatory and payment structure is the limitations that are placed on the scope of hospice services and, by extension, the scope of palliative care available to patients. The capitated, per diem payment structure of the Medicare Hospice Benefit makes no allowance for case mix adjustment and, therefore, imposes severe financial strains on hospice programs when patients require extremely expensive palliative interventions. In the pursuit of comfort and quality of life, appropriate care should exclude no intervention based on intensivity or cost. Ideally, the only test lies in the balance of risks to potential benefits in terms

of advancing the patient's own goals. Under existing payment structures, however, the costs of important palliative interventions, such as external beam radiation therapy, injectable radioisotopes, use of colony stimulating factors, 5-HT3-receptor-blocking antiemetic agents, neurolytic blocks, and surgical procedures, can threaten the very survival of hospice programs, especially smaller programs. It is ironic that at present, patients may be forced to decline or even revoke hospice services to be eligible to receive these valuable and therapeutically appropriate palliative interventions.

Beyond the Dichotomy

Acknowledging the imperfection of the world in which we live and the systems in which we practice, physicians are, nevertheless, challenged to provide the best care possible for patients and their families. In the prevailing "real world" context of practice, advocacy and coordination of services and care are critically important roles for the health care team.

INTEGRATING PALLIATIVE AND LIFE-PROLONGING CARE

At present, curative therapy and palliative care are perceived as dichotomous. Decisions regarding life-prolonging therapy and palliative care tend to be presented in an "either-or" manner. This misperception is reinforced by Medicare regulations and corresponding requirements of some health plans and insurance policies that impose a choice between any further potentially life-prolonging treatment and the comprehensive programs of symptom management, supportive care, aide services, and financial benefits, such as paid prescriptions, that hospice programs provide.

As a result, comprehensive palliative care is often instituted only after life-prolonging care is no longer available or has been rejected by the patient (Fig. 1).13 Within the health care culture, where cure is the highest value, hospice and palliative care are typically viewed as second-rate alternatives, apologetically presented to patients when better options are not available. However, the precepts of palliative care emphasize the importance of continuity of care and offer symptom management, skillful communication, and psychosocial support throughout the course of illness. Correctly understood, palliative care represents a "both-and" model of care (as opposed to "either-or"), in which a smooth transition from mostly curative to mostly palliative interventions is the norm.

Figure Figure 1. Curative vs. Palliative Care

The continuum of palliative care, within the overall management of patients with progressive cancer, is well represented by a simple diagram (Fig. 2).13 As a patient's disease advances and there is proportionately less to offer in terms of life-prolongation, it is logical that the focus of care should progressively shift toward the goals of comfort and quality of life. Thus, despite the apparent dichotomy resulting from the prevailing reimbursement structures,

palliative and life-prolonging efforts well complement one another and can properly proceed simultaneously.

The principle of proportionality, weighing the potential benefits of an available intervention against the risks, underlies the process of care planning and decision making. The values and self-defined goals of the patient, as well as his or her current quality of life form the fulcrum for this ongoing decision-making process.

It should be noted that even at the very end of life, some life-prolonging measures may be warranted if they have potential for advancing the patient's goals with a risk that is deemed acceptable. These treatments are represented by the area above the diagonal line in the upper right corner of Figure 2. Here again, the potential benefits of a therapy must be weighed against its “costs” in terms of potential discomfort, quality of life, and personal goals. A patient who is bedridden following spinal cord compression from extradural metastases, who is deriving value from her present quality of life despite severe functional compromise, might thoughtfully decline hospitalization or intravenous antibiotics should a future pneumonia or bloodborne infection occur, yet might accept antibiotics by mouth or enterostomy tube. Similarly, and without incongruity, the same patient might request a yearly influenza vaccine, fully understanding that it is a life-prolonging measure, albeit with minimal risk of either discomfort or life-shortening complications.

Figure Figure 2. Continuum of Cancer Care: Integrating Palliative and Life-prolonging Care

A MIXED-MANAGEMENT MODEL OF CARE

The process of ongoing care planning involving the patient together with his or her family underpins the mixed-management model of care. At each point from diagnosis through death, the patient or surrogate has the right to make informed choices among all indicated and available options for care. By introducing the concept of palliative interventions aimed at comfort and improving quality of life early in the treatment discussions, physicians can begin to support continuity of care that extends through the end of a patient's life and to the family during bereavement.

Advance care planning includes completion of documents such as a living will, conveying an individual's preferences for care and a durable power of health care, formally appointing a proxy to make decisions if the person is unable to decide for himself or herself. Increasingly, the term advance care planning is also being used to refer to the iterative process of assessing the patient's and family's needs, discussing the risks and benefits of each therapeutic option, and making decisions for the short and midterm future.

Even at the time of diagnosis, physicians must not assume that every patient confronting a serious, life-threatening illness will choose aggressive life-prolonging care. Some patients will carefully consider all options and decide to forgo curative or remissive therapies

despite a fair chance of success. The process of informed consent requires active involvement by physicians and the ethics of decision making allow for strong recommendations on the part of physicians. Ultimately, however, it is the patient or appropriate surrogate whose choice among available options must prevail. Patients and families deserve the best information available, in words they can comprehend, and they deserve clinician's recommendations throughout the course of illness and treatment. Within the ongoing process of care planning, it is the persons served who appropriately determine the proportion of life-prolonging to palliative treatments within the continuum of care at any point in time.

Conclusion
Contemporary palliative care reflects an understanding of dying as an inherent part of life and as a profound personal experience for the individual and family. Clinicians in oncology have essential roles to play in ensuring comfort and enhancing the quality of the dying person's, and the family's, life. Pain and other sources of physical distress associated with far-advanced disease can always be alleviated. Suffering that arises from deeply personal and spiritual or existential sources are clinically approachable. The first step is to acknowledge the person's suffering by listening in a skillful manner. In addition to acknowledging the capacity for human suffering at the end of life, hospice and palliative care recognize dying as a time of remarkable opportunity.
In caring for patients without denying the inevitability of death, by providing care within a team of committed providers, by being fully committed to doing what is necessary to achieve relative comfort, and by acknowledging the lifelong human capacity for growth, clinicians can contribute to a healthy reincorporation of the value of dying within the mystery of life.

11/17/2014
“"Faith is the ability to honor stillness at some moments," Alan Lightman wrote in his sublime meditation on science and spirituality, "and at others to ride the passion and exuberance." In his conversation with E.O. Wilson, the poet Robert Hass described beauty as a "paradox of stillness and motion." But in our Productivity Age of perpetual motion, it's increasingly hard – yet increasingly imperative – to honor stillness””
For me being still even for a moment is a painful struggle, fleeting between an agitated mind and an agitated body looking to fill the moment or fill the space to avoid the feeling of hopelessness that is sprinkled with a dash of despair. To sit and meditate before the child’s delicate birthday candle

requires all the powers within me just to keep the fidgeting and mental distractions at bay.
After muddling through Thoreau's 'Walden' that dissertation on ice melting and grass growing, that incessant ramble on nature and the woes of early 19thCentury life, in the second to the last chapter, he finely reveals, at least to me, the point of his tome. In that second to the last chapter Walden proves himself, to me, the reason for his acclaim. Through all the difficulties in living a simple principled life, one based in one's own principles, there is value and purpose in it, all be it slight. And however so slight it is it can be more fulfilling than any other kind of way of living. Also society any society in any time, its norms; distractions; punishments; and rewards, can be the greatest hindrance to finding that life.

11/21/2014

Dear Matthew
I see something better in you that is better than me better than my father and better than his father. The sight of you gives me a kind of pride that runs deep into my heart, even more, it brings me a hope for all of mankind. Thank you.

Happy Birthday
Sincerely
Me

P.S. enclosed is some cash from your mother and me for you and Hannah to have a good time tonight

11/23/24
Dear Susie
I so appreciate you coming over and spending time with my family. I feel you are a part of that family and my dearest trusted friend. Talking with you helps me understand my, at times, over complicated feelings. You bring me perspective and a gentle kind ear.
Thank you for being in my life.
Sincerely yours
Danielle

11/26/2014

The last two weeks have been full and exciting. Work has been fast passed; very busy and exceedingly profitable. Add to that the hustle and bustle of my son Mathew's birthday. Picking up his mother Kathleen from the airport, taking her up to Ringgold, then the whole gang, children and all, coming down here to stay for four days! Lots of big meals lots of baby care. Kathleen and I, for Matthew's birthday gift, gave him and Hannah an evening "on the town" along with an overnight stay in a luxury hotel. What a hoot it was to see Kathleen Diane and myself care for the twins during their first extended stay away from their parents. All went well. After Matt Hannah and the babies went back to Ringgold and I took Kathleen to the airport on Monday, the cleanup began. For the most things are now normalized. Work is still continuing but not as intense as the last two weeks. I have the house to myself, Diane is away house sitting till Friday. Last night I sat in front of the fireplace and meditated over the flames. All in all it was a wonderful two weeks.
I will call you later today, love you dearly and hope all is well with you.
Sincerely
Danielle

12/01/2014 5 am
"They shoot horses don't they?"
The time has passed for Steven where he would be capable of taking his own life. He talked of it last week and the week before that. But, I think, this weekend has put him past that option.
I imagine the dutiful daughter pacing up and down the hallway, a closed door behind her and behind the closed door is her dying mother.
She, the daughter, moves back and forth, her eyes dark her hair gray before its time. The lines of woe across her face now permanently etched in her flesh as if a reminder for all time of her vigil march up and down the hallway.
The madness of death screams out from behind that closed door, calling to the living. Crying out to stay or to take her child with her. The fear in the dying voice drives the vigil march on and on never ceasing till it last breath and beyond. Beyond for the living to still carry the dead with them only to let go upon their own death. Yet passed on again to those they leave behind.

This is not an easy time for me. It is a reminder of my father's death.

12/8/14 6 AM
Dear friend and comrade
What an enjoyable evening I had with you last night, it rounded out what was a difficult week with compassion and comfort. Thank you. After you left my home I noticed that earlier in the day I had not flushed the bathroom toilet, leaving a shit floating in the bowl. I though "Jesus Christ what a discussing thing for you to see" (if you did see, maybe you didn't)but then I though "oh well now you have seen all of me, the shit and the polish, both literally and figuratively". Now that is a good definition of friendship: "I have seen it all and I still love you".
Sincerely
Your loving friend

12/9/2014
Not sure I called you yesterday, it was a busy hectic day. Steven was moved in an acute ward around noon. I did not go there in the morning. Janice is back today and will turn things over to her. I am letting go some still clinging to other things. Emotionally I am calm and peaceful most the time, mentally it is hard to get thoughts out of my head: Steven and his ding, his needs after he dies what can I do, what should I do, how do I do it. Can I let go without shame? Then there are the toughs of my own existence, its meaning how I want it to end. What do I need to do to prepare? All this bares the bigger question; How do I just live and set worry and fear aside? This morning I will listen to music and let that fill my head.
12/12/2014
It seems that life swifts me away and caries me along. Months even years pass by so fast. I grab this moment to let you know I think of you often with fondness and remembrance of life long ago and life's recent encounters. Those memories come in many ways, in dreams in a moments meditation in the music that reaches my ears and in the faces of those I love and see today. All this brings everything back. The joys of yesterday that I hold dear the sorrows that I mend with kindness and slef-forgiveness they all are part of me part of my life. And you my childhood's dearest friend not forgotten not lost, fond memories to the end. For sure you have grown changed became a different person and I am gifted to have seen some of that too. There is always a place in my heart with you there, if by chance or design I do not know It just is.
Merry Christmas and happy New Year.

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“Every so often the world, or parts of the world, unravel. The threads of existence pull apart separate and leave behind gaps in the tapestry of life. Up close these gaps seem vast, from afar they are minor little imperfections that give the total a character and a distinctive, one of a kind, beauty.” Thoughts from my LSD trip July 1967

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12/20/2014
Four words that are diapering from the human language
"Our kids can forget about these words: Privacy Average Later Local"
Privacy is over
Average is over, computers can do much better than average.
Later is over, whatever you want to save you had better do I now especially when it comes to the environment.

Local is over, what you do in Las Vegas no longer stays in Las Vegas. Some camera is going to pick it up and send it around the world.
Tom Friedman
The New York Times

12/21/2014
Dear Susie
Listening to 'A Charlie Brown Christmas' performed by Vince Guaraldi, my most favored Christmas music, I think of you.
How precious life is. All the joking and cavorting around I do all the complaining and struggling about this and that in life seams meaningless now just an entertaining diversion. I often ponder all the things I have not accomplished all I wanted to do and find no time to do them anymore. Pondering all the closed doors behind me, that too just a diversion.
I am so privileged just to see and hear all the wondrous things life and the world have created. Also privileged to have a hand, though it may be small, in some of life's creations. Privileged still to be able to act with some level of creativity. And you, I am so grateful to have you in my life part of my joy.
On December 27 My Grandchildren, my Son Hannah and Diane will be celebrating Christmas here and as you are part of my family I would be most grateful if you could attend.
Sincerely
Danielle

12/22/2014
"Live, that's the message. Life is a banquet and most poor suckers are starving to death"
Mame Dennis

12/31/2014
As the year closes it is not easy for me to look too far back. The moment that stands out the most was a few days ago. It was a little after midnight last Saturday. Matthew and Hannah were out spending time for just the two of them. I was babysitting Levi and Gabriel and when they woke up, they both were suffering from slight congestion most all the weekend, I held them in the dark dimly lit room and sang them a lullaby. Gabriel fell asleep first and I placed him in his crib. Levi was breathing heavily each breath fallowed by a soft whimper. Holding him closer I

kept on singing my voice soft and warmer in its tone, warmer than I have ever heard before. I cried in that moment. Not from joy or sorrow but something much deeper.
Looking forward has most always been like looking into an abyss. Today that view is different; a bluff in a morning mist overlooking a vast plain. The survey not completely clear but the path, still unknown, is visible.